

## Welcome

Hi, my name is Holly Utrata-Halcomb. I am the District Administrator of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District (HCSWCD). This brochure will tell you about all the services we provide for our residents. Our goal is to serve and educate the community to be better stewards of our natural resources. I hope you enjoy reading and learning about our different departments and the services we provide. Please give us a call if we can be of assistance.

Thank you,
Holly Utrata-Halcomb
District Administrator



### **//OUR MISSION**

We are a public organization committed to assisting the citizens of Hamilton County through education, technical assistance and leadership to be stewards of our soil and water resources.

To be a dynamic leader in soil and water conservation, working to achieve the sustainable use of our soil and water resources on a local and regional basis.

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#### // BACKGROUND

In the early 1930s, along with the greatest depression this nation ever experienced, came an equally unparalleled ecological disaster known as the Dust Bowl. Following a severe and sustained drought in the Great Plains, the region's soil began to erode and blow away; creating huge black dust storms that blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside. Thousands of "dust refugees" left the black fog to seek better lives.

On Capitol Hill, while testifying about the Credit: NOAA George E. Marsh Album erosion problem, soil scientist Hugh Hammond



Bennett threw back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust. Congress unanimously passed legislation declaring soil and water conservation a national policy and priority. Because nearly three-fourths of the continental United States is privately owned, Congress realized that only active, voluntary support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation work on private land.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote the governors of all the states recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. Today, the country is blanketed with nearly 3,000 conservation districts.

### OUR SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT//

Hamilton County SWCD was established in 1945 to assist agriculture landowners in reducing soil loss on their fields. The District has always been run by a publicly elected Board of five volunteer supervisors that serve three-year terms.

Another important role the District played was in developing farm ponds and lakes. Since Hamilton County has no natural lakes, farmers often had to make several trips a day to the nearest stream to haul water for livestock. Hundreds of farm lakes have been surveyed and sited by the District and our Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partner. It may be a surprise to some that there are still over 225 food and fiber farms in Hamilton County. There is also a robust green industry that includes nurseries and greenhouses in addition to one of Ohios' largest population of horse operations and owners. As the sprawl of Hamilton County accelerated during the late 1960s, the demand for assistance on such issues as erosion, hillside stability, storm water and streambank erosion grew from the suburban and urban sector.

In 1992, the District took on the administration of the Hamilton County Earthwork Regulations that governed earth movement on development sites. In 2003, the District was asked to also be responsible for the Education, Community Involvement and Pre-Construction components of Phase II of the Clean Water Act that addressed non-point source pollution.

Due to our County's topography and soil types, Hamilton County is considered to have one of the highest erosion factors in the State. As the County's needs grow and change, the District has adapted with our constant focus on assisting all residents; rural, suburban or urban in protecting our soil and water resources through leadership,

# Agriculture



Everyone wants to enjoy a healthy environment. There is no doubt that we can all benefit from productive soil, clean water, fresh air and abundant wildlife. With that being the case, conservation is a must. Our mission is to help people help the land. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency under the U.S Department of Agriculture, dedicated to working with landowners on private lands to conserve natural resources.

NRCS and Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District (HCSWCD) use various programs to accomplish our conservation goal. Two incredibly popular programs are the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). EQIP helps farmers with pasture seeding, interior fencing, heavy

use areas, bush honeysuckle removal along with countless other resource concerns. CRP helps farmers install grassed waterways, quail buffers on the edges of crop land and countless other conservation practices. Through the seasonal high tunnel initiative NRCS helps producers plan and put into operation high tunnels or polyethylene (plastic)-covered structures. High tunnels are ideal for those producers who grow vegetables or specialty crops and want to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner. The benefits of installing a high tunnel include: increased profitability, better plant and soil quality, fewer nutrients and pesticides



**United States Department of Agriculture**Natural Resources Conservation Service

in the environment and better air quality due to fewer vehicles needed to transport crops. More than 4,000 high tunnels have been planned and implemented nationwide through this initiative over the past two years.

NRCS uses the Air Quality Initiative to help producers address air quality concerns on their operations. We offer assistance in establishing cover crops, planting windbreaks, implementing nutrient management practices and applying other conservation measures that mitigate or prevent air quality problems. The goal of this initiative is to reduce airborne particulate matter and greenhouse gases while conserving energy.

Together with our partners at the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District we help farmers and ranchers develop conservation systems uniquely suited to their land and individual ways of doing business. We strive to protect the environment and help people help the land.

#### URBAN GARDENING IN HAMILTON COUNTY//

Hamilton County's landscape has undergone changes in the past few decades. The area has moved from mixture of urban, suburban and rural area to becoming predominantly urban and suburban. Urbanization means more construction, more paved roads and more parking lots. While these are positive economic indicators, they also mean less green spaces and more runoff.

The urban gardening program of the HCSWCD encourages urban residents to participate in gardening, creating green spaces for rest, relaxation and pollution control. The District provides residents with soil test kits at reduced rates to help urban residents grow healthy gardens, trees and lawn. Soil test reports assist residents in applying only the nutrients the plants need. Thus, reducing over-fertilization. This has a positive impact on water quality. The District has two cover crop sales during

the year to help residents literally grow their own fertilizer. Cover crop mixes are the cutting-edge of agricultural technology, which the District has adapted for urban gardening. They are crops that are grown to cover the soil and are not harvested. They bring essential nutrients and ideal growing conditions to the soil. Growing cover crops reduces the need to use fertilizers and pesticides, they save money and improve water quality. If you need help with your garden, lawn, or need a soil test kit give us a call or visit our website.

# Land Management



"When the vegetation covering the soil is removed for construction activities, mining operations and timber harvesting the rate of erosion is accelerated tremendously; it can increased by 10 to 1000 times."

-Dan Taphorn

Erosion is a natural process that occurs when it rains, the snow melts or the wind blows. Natural erosion occurs at a rate of approximately 1 to 2 tons per acre of land per year. When the plants and trees are removed for construction activities, mining operations and timber harvesting the rate of erosion is accelerated tremendously; it can increased by 10 to 1000 times. Erosion and off site sedimentation is the largest pollutant of our nations rivers by volume. Accelerated erosion from construction activities is considered pollution; the eroded soils (sediments) cause environmental problems to the organisms that live in the water and to the quality of the air we breathe. Sediments are costly to remove from drinking water, they clog storm drainage systems and can cause flooding problems.

The Hamilton County Earthwork Regulations address the Construction Site Runoff Control

requirements of the Ohio EPA's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit as set forth under the Federal Clean Water Act. The Federal Clean Water Act requires construction projects to install and maintain erosion prevention and sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce the amount of erosion that occurs during construction and to capture the eroded soils onsite. Some BMPs that may be used on a construction project are seeding and mulching bare soil to minimize erosion or installing sediment basins or traps to capture the sediment onsite.

All construction projects that clear more than 1 acre of land are required to submit an erosion prevention and sediment control plan before an Earthwork Permit can be issued. Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District (HCSWCD)works with engineers, land

developers and contractors to install BMPs quickly to get the erosion conditions as close to natural conditions as soon as possible.

The Earthwork Staff assists engineers, developers, contractors and land owners on the various Federal, State and local regulatory requirements that apply to their projects. We have a wide variety of resources to help them through the permitting process.

We also assist property owners with Urban Land Management issues. We can assist in providing resources such as soils information, guidance on drainage and erosion, pond maintenance and hillside stability issues. We can meet with property owners and provide guidance and technical assistance on possible solutions. Contact the District's Earthwork Staff for help with your drainage, erosion and pond issues.



## Education



### // EDUCATION IN HAMILTON COUNTY

"You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives."

-Clay P. Bedford

At the Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District (HCSWCD), we strive to ignite a child's curiosity. We believe that conservation education extends to all ages and that students can develop an understanding of conservation at an early age that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

The District offers FREE programming to any Hamilton County classroom, library, scout group or recreation facility. We have

over 30 different presentations designed to educate students about a variety of local conservation topics. We have developed our programs to be fun, interactive and most of all educational! We truly enjoy creating a handson learning experience that leaves participants with a respect for their environment and the confidence to know that they can do the right things to make a difference, no matter what their age.

Want to take it up a notch? In addition to offering educational programs, we have a variety of contests that encourage students to become engaged in community and environmental issues. Hundreds of students from throughout the County have participated in our poster, essay and sculpture contests. Each year the theme changes, but it's always

related to the conservation of our natural resources. High School students can be a part of our area Envirothon, competing against other high school students throughout South-West Ohio in environmental science topics at an outdoor facility. They can also choose to compete to win money while gaining college skills and making a change in their community when they enter the Caring For Our Watersheds competition.

We have opportunities for educators too! We award grants to teachers each year to integrate conservation into their curriculum. By building outdoor classrooms, going on field trips or purchasing science equipment, teachers are able to help unlock their students' curiosity about the natural world. We also offer environmental education teacher workshops throughout the year in nationally recognized curricula such as Project WET and Project WILD, giving teachers the opportunity to learn and network.

We strive to create curiosity in all those that we have the opportunity to meet and hope they leave with a renewed sense of excitement about the natural world. We look forward to working with you and your students soon.

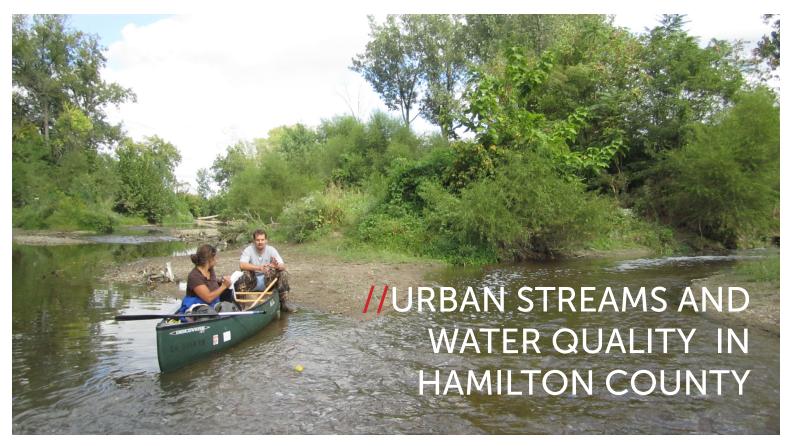




# COMMUNITY EVENTS IN HAMILTON COUNTY//

Fairs and festivals are seen as times of enjoyment and relaxation. At HCSWCD, we think of it also as a time to educate our residents. We use fun activities based on classic carnival games to engage visitors. We have activities like Stormwater Cornhole, the Wheel of Conservation and "The Watershed" life-size board game where you are the pawn! Kids and adults alike enjoy participating in these fun activities, winning prizes as they learn about the environment. Next time you are at a local festival/fair anywhere in Hamilton County look for us and stop by. If you are planning on hosting a community fair, event or festival give us a call and we will be glad to help.

## **Urban Streams**



The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District (HCSWCD) Urban Streams Program strives to improve the state of our watersheds within the county borders and beyond. The major rivers flowing through Hamilton County to the Ohio River include the Little Miami River, Mill Creek and the Great Miami River. There are many additional subwatersheds within the primary watersheds. Within these watersheds and sub-watersheds, there are numerous land use issues directly related to water quality.

We provide technical support to land owners, communities, government agencies, watershed groups, nonprofit organizations, consultants, universities, utilities and other entities. Technical support occurs through on-site consultations; review of designs and plans; assistance with streamside plantings and storm water BMP installation such as rain gardens and pervious pavement; engaging the public through stream walks, canoe floats,

waterway clean-ups and community meetings; conducting project specific monitoring and partnership in citizen's water quality monitoring efforts.

While many of the initiatives of the Urban Streams Program are administered internally, there are numerous opportunities for the public to become a part of the solution in working to improve our local waterways. If you would like to become more involved in the water quality solution, we welcome your support! We guarantee that you will be rewarded with a greater knowledge of biological, chemical and physical connections within our watersheds, as well as the opportunity for hands on learning. You may get an up-close and personal encounter with some of Hamilton County's unique stream organisms, which include aguatic invertebrates, salamanders, mussels and fish! If interested in learning more, please call us or visit our website.

A few of the issue areas addressed by the Urban Streams Program are as follows:

- Land uses relating to water quality
- Storm water BMPs
- Streamside management practices
- Regulatory reform through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Storm Water Program
- Capital improvement projects
- Watershed action plans and inter-governmental watershed planning strategies
- Public engagement
- Mitigating project or development related impacts to waterways
- · Water quality monitoring

YOU CAN HELP KEEP OUR WATER CLEAN

Each Hamilton County resident probably passes by numerous storm drains during their everyday commute.

These metal structures by the curb are widely misunderstood and misused on a daily basis. Most people assume that water entering the storm drain goes to a water treatment plant. However, predominantly this is not the case; storm drains connect to local water bodies. Once people learn the final end of the storm water it gives them a new perspective on their neighborhood storm drains. People no longer want to use it as a dumping area for litter or as a drain to dispose of unwanted liquids. One of the most effective ways in educating people on this topic is Storm Drain Labeling. This task can be accomplished with very few resources but has a great impact and can be done by practically any age group.

By organizing a storm drain labeling event in your neighborhood you can improve water quality. Contact us to see how you can get your community involved in this free event.



\\Together we can make a change in our community!

Follow us on our website and social media to know how you can be a part of the change.//





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HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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